

PARTNERSHIPS

The Key to Building a Disaster Resistant Community

This chapter describes how to identify and build constructive partnerships in your community. The concept is simple: We can accomplish more together as a group than as individuals. This chapter will help you identify who you should seek out to become partners in this effort and why. It also will offer ideas to help you convince these potential partners that they are not simply interested bystanders but true stakeholders in Project Impact. This process will help you recruit the right team to make your community disaster resistant.



CASE STUDY

DARLINGTON, WI



Partnership Takes Root

When the City of Darlington was flooded in 1993, community leaders decided enough was enough. After experiencing previous flooding in 1950, 1959, 1969, and 1990 the city—its businesses and citizens—decided they could no longer sit by and let nature decide the future of their community. Their losses were extensive and directly related to the infrastructure and commerce that were the foundation of the city. The damages included: ● The closing of all major highways into the city ● Damaged fuel and chemical storage tanks located along the river ● Damage at the city's wastewater treatment plant ● Damage to over 30 businesses in the historical downtown area.

After having bridges and roads washed out, extensive crop damage, dozens of homes and businesses damaged, sewer and power damage, and recreational facilities destroyed, the elected leaders of Darlington realized that they had to take action to protect their community. They also realized that they could not do it alone. The cycle of repeated flooding indicated that mitigation measures were needed and that a partnership would need to be developed to acquire the necessary resources. Working with FEMA, the Economic Development Agency, the State, businesses, and citizens, Darlington planned a course of action that would protect the homes, families, businesses, and critical infrastructure that were vital to its future prosperity.

The city undertook many successful mitigation actions. They included: ● Floodproofing 12 buildings and relocating another 15 in the downtown area (This ensured that the area would be resistant to future floods.) ● Developing an alternate site for business operation (A business park on a 35-acre parcel south of Darlington was developed so that those businesses located in the floodplain would have a place to relocate. This ensured that the businesses were safe while at the same time protecting the tax and economic base of the city.) ● Preventing future development near the river (Darlington acquired land near the river and converted it to recreational space to ensure that future flooding would not threaten homes or businesses in the area.).

By bringing together different parties and interests—in partnership—the leaders of Darlington struck upon the core concept of a disaster resistant community: We can accomplish more together than apart.

WHY PARTNERSHIPS?

Natural disasters permeate every corner of our communities. No individual, business, or organization is left untouched. **If your community were to suffer the hardship of a natural disaster, everyone would need to pull together to recover.** This partnership is inherent in any community's struggle to address the consequences of earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, or wildfires. When carrying out an agenda of mitigation, this same partnership will be central to your long-term success.

LIKELY PARTNERS

A Public-Private Collaboration

In helping your community protect itself against natural disasters, you will be most effective if you draw upon the experiences, resources, and policies already in place within your community. The challenge is to bring together all of these elements under one roof to reduce redundancy, identify weaknesses and strengths, and ensure the most effective effort. Communities should form or identify a *Disaster Resistant Community Planning Committee* composed of local officials, business professionals, and other stakeholders with a shared interest in and obligation to protecting the safety and economic stability of your community for the future.

Keep in mind that business people are often community leaders—their responsibilities to their business and community are both complementary and interwoven. This is a mutually beneficial process that already exists to some extent: The loss-reduction efforts undertaken by local governments naturally support corporate risk reduction and vice versa.

Please see Darlington, Wisconsin case study which illustrates the success of building partnerships on page 6.

► Besides reducing the direct costs associated with natural disasters, mitigation reduces important indirect costs such as the disruption of daily routines, community services, commerce, and industry. Once you have everyone working together, you will find that the entire community can stand behind Project Impact because its goal is to protect the well-being and secure the future of everyone in your community.



This cooperative collaboration will help determine the best outcomes in disaster resistance initiatives. For example, perhaps someone already has developed a business interruption plan that others can emulate to minimize loss of jobs and activity resulting from disaster. Or, perhaps another one of the Project Impact partners could offer incentives to help others address their own risks.

Building consensus about the mitigation needs in your community is essential to success. A broad-based task force can build upon the views of everyone involved—from the citizens of your community to construction professionals to businesses and to policy makers—and identify the roles each can play in Project Impact.

WHO SHOULD TAKE THE LEAD?

Identifying a Community CEO

You will want to identify a person with entrepreneurial spirit and capabilities to oversee Project Impact to ensure its progress and ultimate success. This person could be a business executive, town manager, or leader of a civic group. It is most important to identify an individual who is clearly able to spearhead the effort and take responsibility for the initiative—to make decisions, defuse the issues, secure resources, and get things done. As an outgrowth of their responsibilities, a local government official should serve as support for the Community CEO and the *Disaster Resistant Community Planning Committee*.

WHO SHOULD BE INCLUDED?

► Listed below are the primary sectors in a community that can be considered essential to mitigation and pre-disaster efforts. Each should be represented on the *Disaster Resistant Community Planning Committee*. They are:

- Industry & Business
- Infrastructure: Transportation, Utilities & Housing
- Volunteer & Community-Based Organizations
- Health Care
- Government
- Workforce
- Education

For a more detailed outline of potential partners, please refer to the Community Partners Checklist at the back of the guidebook.

WHY SHOULD THESE PEOPLE BE INCLUDED?

Once you have identified potential partners, it will be important to clearly define the reasons that will provide the rationale for their involvement. For example, the business and labor sectors have a significant interest in the durability of the communities in which they operate. The community supplies their work place, their workforce, and their market. It also supplies the infrastructure systems such as roads, electricity, and water on which commerce relies. But



because each entity has a different agenda and different risks, you will need to explain specifically to every partner why they need to get involved with Project Impact and how they can help.

Consider ways in which the participation of Project Impact partners will help *them*. What incentives and benefits exist or can be created to help win their support? Additionally, consider what these people and their institutions are doing already to help the community. Building community goodwill, for example, can be a motivating factor for some partners.

Refer to the Resource ID Checklist at the back of the guidebook for more information about incentives.

MOTIVATING PROJECT IMPACT PARTNERS

Recruiting potential partners for the *Disaster Resistant Community Planning Committee* should not be difficult if participants clearly understand the importance of Project Impact and what they can gain from involvement.

► The potential community participants are summarized below to help you recruit partners and determine specifically what each partner can contribute to the *Disaster Resistant Community Planning Committee*:

Industry & Business The business community can help the greater community reduce its vulnerability to disaster by considering how its mitigation needs apply to the community beyond its business. Internal, business-specific priorities—such as ensuring transportation systems and routes to facilities remain clear and functional following a disaster—also benefit the employees who work at the business, the surrounding neighborhoods, commerce, and the economy. Furthermore, many businesses have direct economic incentives for enacting and participating in mitigation efforts undertaken by a community.

See Des Moines, Iowa case study on page 14 for an example of how business mitigation efforts can affect an entire community.

► A close look at the definitions of the words “community,” “partnership,” and “alliance” reveals that they are linked: It takes alliances to build partnerships and partnerships to make up a community. Much of this partnership exercise will consist of building on existing alliances and re-defining the nature of other partnerships.

Infrastructure A community's infrastructure provides the lifelines without which citizens and businesses could not function. It is vital that representatives of lifeline organizations be involved.

Transportation systems include roads, bridges, railroads, transit systems, ports, and airports. They are critical to disaster response and recovery, as well as to facilitating ongoing commerce. Damage can leave communities isolated and at economic risk. Transportation experts can provide a wealth of knowledge and insight as participants on the committee.

Utilities serve communities with electricity, natural gas, heating fuels, fresh water, and wastewater disposal. Utility loss can create critical problems for emergency response, life support in hospitals, business operation and recovery. Utilities represent one of the most critical lifelines and must be involved. *For a specific example refer to the Des Moines, Iowa case study on page 14.*

Housing, both for single-family and multi-unit buildings, is often needlessly exposed to damage because of location in a hazard zone or because of structural weaknesses that make it vulnerable to damage. Building practices and outdated building codes often exacerbate conditions that create avoidable risks to life and damage that would render the buildings useless after a disaster. The debris created from damaged buildings and homes restricts mobility and imposes clean-up costs on local governments.



Volunteer & Community-Based Organizations The philanthropic missions of many of your community's civic and religious organizations should compel them to get involved. They invest time and money to improve your community. It would be counterproductive for these caring and dedicated organizations and people to make investments and take actions that might be destroyed by disasters.

Health Care Representatives of health care facilities must be involved because it is crucial that these facilities are built or retrofitted to withstand hazards so they can provide continuous service.

Hospitals provide not only the vital medical services a community needs on a daily basis but also serve as a critical element in post-disaster emergency services. Their importance to any community—pre-disaster or post-disaster—cannot be overstated.

Case Study: Anheuser-Busch

Keeping the Suds Safe: Seismic Retrofitting to Avoid Business Disruption
Anheuser-Busch operates a large brewery just a few miles from what became the epicenter of the Northridge Earthquake on January 17, 1994. • In light of the area's high earthquake hazard, Anheuser-Busch had initiated a risk reduction program at the brewery in the early 1980s. A risk assessment of critical buildings and equipment was performed, and those with unacceptable levels of risk were seismically upgraded over time without adversely affecting daily operations. • Because of the mitigation actions, the plant incurred only minor damage when the earthquake struck. Anheuser-Busch conservatively estimates that, had seismic strengthening not been performed, direct and business interruption losses at the brewery could have exceeded \$300 million. According to Anheuser-Busch, this is more than 15 times the actual cost of the loss control program. Clearly, this loss control program paid for itself. • While this is but one example, it clearly indicates that mitigation measures can strengthen corporate balance sheets.

CREATING ALLIANCES

A key part of building a disaster resistant community is creating the alliances that will make it happen. While most organizations involved in Project Impact are already partners in disaster relief and recovery, the idea of committing resources to mitigate disaster effects may be a hard sell. A key part of developing and strengthening a coalition is to make sure that every participant benefits from the partnership. As each organization is contacted and agrees to serve on the *Disaster Resistant Community Planning Committee*, the collaborations must be negotiated and benefits defined.

Federal, State, County & Local Governments play an important role in managing hazard risks—providing early warning, pre-disaster mitigation, emergency assistance, and response and recovery resources. Government commitment to Project Impact is vital to the daily lives of its citizens and business community. More important, it is the role—as well as the duty and responsibility—of the government to protect the public health, safety, and economic stability and growth of its communities.

Workforce Those who work in your community—whether they are factory workers, accountants, or laborers—will see their lives, jobs, and families changed if a disaster strikes. By not taking steps to become disaster resistant, your community is in danger—every individual is at risk. The unions, professional societies, and other labor groups must bring resources and spirit to this endeavor. Employees have the power and responsibility to discuss and promote the idea of mitigation with their employers. The job they save may be their own.

Education Schools and day care centers represent the most important asset of a community—the living embodiment of its future. They must be able to withstand disasters without endangering the children they care for. In addition, many serve as primary shelter sites during and after disasters. If schools are closed for long periods of time post-disaster, other problems arise. Parents' day care needs increase. Classes may never get made up. The schools may lose funding from the state if they do not remain operational for a certain number of days, so the school year may be lengthened. Those responsible for educational facilities, therefore, must be involved.



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- ▶ Remember that the activities of the *Disaster Resistant Community Planning Committee* will be long-term and must be integrated into the policies and practices of the entire community to be successful.



► As you assemble and organize the *Disaster Resistant Community Planning Committee*, consider the following perspectives and note that each member should:

- Have the authority to make decisions on behalf of his or her organization
- Understand and respect natural hazards
- Understand community vulnerability
- Acknowledge that citizens, agencies, businesses, and individuals are responsible for addressing risks
- Have some knowledge of how to address community risks
- Have the desire to address risks and mitigate them
- Have the ability to communicate Project Impact to colleagues, partners, and others

Sharing information among all Project Impact partners is crucial to reducing risk. Not only is each member responsible for their own interests, personnel, and facilities, they need to provide information about those interests, needs, and concerns to others—because what affects one partner will have a resonating effect on the others.

Since meetings are a vital component of building partnerships, there are additional pointers to help you conduct meetings in the Community Partners Checklist at the back of the guidebook.

BUILDING A DISASTER RESISTANT COMMUNITY SUMMARY

► Upon completion of the First Phase of Project Impact you should have:

- Identified a Community CEO
- Identified and contacted likely partners
- Developed or reproduced Project Impact materials
- Held first planning committee meeting
- Established subgroups to tackle identified issues
- Begun the process of hazard identification and vulnerability





CHECKLIST

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



The following organizations and community groups should be involved in disaster mitigation efforts. This Project Impact potential partners checklist is meant to be a guide; you can design your contact list to meet the specific needs of your community.



Industry & Business	
Employers (<i>top 10 or 20 minimum</i>)	
Business Associations (<i>regional and neighborhood</i>)	
Chamber of Commerce	
Real Estate Developers	
Construction Industry	
Infrastructure	
Transportation Systems (<i>public and private</i>)	
Public Housing	
Utilities	
• gas	
• water and sewage	
• electric	
• telephone	
• cable	
Volunteer & Community-Based Organizations	
Places of Worship/Religious Groups	
Red Cross	
Kiwanis	
Lions Club	
Jaycees	
Knights of Columbus	
Rotary	
American Association of Retired Persons	
Public Interest Groups	
Parents-Teachers Association (PTA)	
Environmental Groups	
Neighborhood Associations	

Health Care	
Hospitals	
Medical Clinics	
Managed Care Facilities	
Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	
Government	
Federal	
• FEMA & other federal agencies	
State	
• representatives of governor	
• state agencies	
County & Local	
Elected Officials	
Town Managers	
Task Forces	
State Agencies	
• police department/law enforcement	
• fire department	
• public works	
• planning committee	
• zoning	
Workforce	
Unions (AFL-CIO)	
Professional Groups	
Education	
School Board	
Public & Private	
Universities & Community Colleges	
Vocational & Continuing Education	
Day Care & Child Care Centers	
Nursery Schools & Pre-Kindergarten	
Others	

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CHECKLIST

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Conducting a Successful Meeting

Meetings are an important part of the activities of the *Disaster Resistant Community Planning Committee*, and in the beginning successful meetings can influence the momentum and enthusiasm of participants. Here are a few pointers for conducting successful committee meetings, many of which have been excerpted from the book *Fat Free Meetings* by Burt Albert, Peterson's 1996.

Mark Your Calendar: Establish a calendar of meeting dates, times, and locations and post or deliver it to all committee members.	
Set the Vision: At the first meeting of the committee, make sure everyone is in agreement about the following items regarding the committee:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose <input type="checkbox"/> Scope <input type="checkbox"/> Limitations <input type="checkbox"/> Deliverables <input type="checkbox"/> Milestones <input type="checkbox"/> Deadlines	
Set the Tone Among Participants: At the first meeting, invite participants to answer the questions below—they can either read them out loud or have the written answers reproduced for distribution at the meeting. These questions are designed to give insight to each participant's concerns, desires, and values.	
• What do I see as my role and responsibilities to this committee?	
• To be successful here, what do I need from the rest of the committee?	
• To be successful here, what do I need to give to the committee?	
• How do I see our committee contributing to the betterment of our community?	
• What specific things will occur in this meeting and through this committee to ensure such an outcome?	
• How do I plan to contribute to the success of this meeting and this committee?	
Check Level of Understanding: Some information that will be discussed at <i>Disaster Resistant Community Planning Committee</i> meetings will be somewhat technical, yet it is critical to the risk assessment and mitigation components of the Project Impact campaign. Ask questions of the participants to make sure they understand everything that is discussed and why it is important before misunderstandings become a barrier to progress.	
Set Goals: To ensure focus, the meeting facilitator should set goals for the meeting and consider sharing these goals with the group. For example, ask yourself:	
• If this meeting were a press event, what headline would I want to come out of this meeting?	
• What will participants take away from the meeting? What will be its value?	
• How will I measure the success of this meeting—what specific things need to be seen or heard?	
Set the Agenda: Urge participants to submit agenda requests on a standardized form that outlines what the individual would like the committee to do, why he or she would like the committee to do it, and what benefit it will bring to the committee and project as a whole. This prevents unnecessary agenda items that can be handled on an individual or subgroup basis, as well as reveals topics that need to be further developed before they are submitted to the entire committee.	
Have an Action-Oriented Agenda: When developing the agenda for the committee meetings, use action-oriented words that don't merely state what you are going to talk about, but connote activity and even outcomes. This helps keep your meeting focused and cuts down on time. For example, compare the following:	
Agenda Items Agenda Action Items	
<input type="checkbox"/> Committee Members	<input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting New Committee Members
<input type="checkbox"/> Risk Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> First Steps for Risk Assessment
<input type="checkbox"/> Publicity	<input type="checkbox"/> Appointing a Publicity Subcommittee

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